

February 2, 2023

Honorable Senator William C. Smith Jr.  
Chair, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee  
Miller Senate Office Building, 2 East  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Testimony in SUPPORT of SB27 – **Criminal Procedure - Restorative Justice Program**

Dear Chair William C. Smith Jr. and Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee Members:

My name is Anthony Muhammad (formerly Anthony Fair). Thirty-years ago, on January 26, 1993, at the age of 15, I was arrested for two homicides charges in the City of Baltimore. I was ultimately convicted and sentenced to life plus 20-years in prison for the crimes that I committed. Just four-months ago, on September 20, 2022, I was released under the Maryland *Juvenile Restoration Act* (JRA), after serving a total of 29-years, 7-months, and 29-days. <sup>1</sup>

There are no words adequate enough to express the depths of my remorse for the crimes that I have committed. I made a horrible decision! The worst decision I ever made in my life; the decision to take the life of another human being. I am truly sorry for the crimes I committed, and deeply regret my actions.

After God, I believe that there is no better place to express my remorse, other than *directly* to the families of the victims. After God, I believe that there is no better place to acknowledge, confess, repent, atone, and ask forgiveness for the crimes that I have committed, other than *directly* to the families of the victims, whose lives my actions I irreparably changed.

Unfortunately, the opportunity to express my remorse, directly to the family of the victims, did not exist for me, within a process, specifically, during my incarceration. Currently, the Maryland Division of Correction, the DPSCS, does not have a program or process where an offender can **request** any form of victim/offender dialogue or mediation to express remorse.

On November 26, 2022, just two months after my release, I finally had the opportunity to participate in a victim/offender dialogue. The completely voluntary process was initiated by the Sentencing Review Unit out of the Baltimore City State's Attorney Office, and ultimately the very successful mediation was facilitated by the *Baltimore Community Mediation Center*.

In my conclusion, every year, during the month of April, one week is dedicated as *National Crime Victims' Rights Week* (NCVRW). Since 2011, I have had the great honor and the privilege of participating in events in recognition of NCVRW. More specifically, since 2015, I have directly hosted events in recognition of NCVRW, as President of *The Lifer's Conference*, an inmate organization inside the *Maryland Correctional Institution* in Hagerstown (MCI-H).

As president of *The Lifer's Conference*, over the last 8-years, I have worked directly with, and partnered with, many of the victims' rights advocates and organizations in Maryland, including *Maryland Crime Victims' Resource Center* (MCVRC), the *Maryland House of Ruth, Mothers Against Drunk Driving* (MADD), and many others. I hosted both the Victims' Services Unit out of the Office of the State's Attorney in Washington County as well as the Victims' Services Unit out of the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS).

Since its inception, I have worked with the *Maryland Restorative Justice Initiative* (MRJI), founded by good friend and mentor, Walter Lomax. I believe in "restorative justice." I believe in the lost ideal of "rehabilitation." And I believe that at the very root of the restorative justice process or the rehabilitative process, there must be something in place, that at the very least, allows and offender to simple **request** some form of victim/offender dialogue or mediation.

It is my belief that the rehabilitation of an offender is **never** complete without a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of “*The Ripple Effect*,” the consequences of crime and the devastating effects upon the victim and the victim’s family. I believe that awareness, that realization, for an offender, is *best* achieved through victim/offender dialogue or mediation.

Remarkably, for the very first time, Senate Bill 27 creates the *framework* for that opportunity, leaving the details of what that process will look like to the professionals, and merely gives an offender the opportunity to simply **request** to participate in the process. For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on SB27.

Thank you for your time and consideration on this urgent matter.

Respectfully submitted,

Anthony Muhammad

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<sup>1</sup> Segelbaum, Dylan. ‘It means everything:’ How the Juvenile Restoration Act has provided a second chance for people sentenced as children to prison in Maryland.” ***The Banner***. October 3, 2022: <https://www.thebaltimorebanner.com/community/criminal-justice/it-means-everything-how-the-juvenile-restoration-act-has-provided-a-second-chance-for-people-sentenced-as-children-to-prison-in-maryland-HDCZ6OY2TFAR3G4IUK6VKUTJUM/>